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ABSTRACT

An individualized reading program was designed and implemented in a two-teacher open classroom program for children in grades four, five, and six. This paper describes the following aspects of the program: development of instructional objectives; assessment of pupils' reading behavior through the use of a criterion-referenced reading inventory; instructional procedures, including teacher-directed and independent group reading activities, individually prescribed instruction and practice, pupil-selected reading activities, and oral reading; and program evaluation. The paper includes sample forms used in diagnosing pupils' reading achievement according to the results of the reading inventory, and it discusses results of formal and informal measures that revealed the program's success in improving students' reading motivation and achievement. (GW)

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DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM IN AN OPEN CLASSROOM

Last September, after twelve years of being an "ivory-tower expert who does not really understand what it is like to be in a classroom day after day," (Shiman, 1974) I returned to public school teaching. My previous 12 years of teaching experience had been in self-contained classrooms in both rural and urban schools. To extend my experience and to gain some understanding of the problems involved, I elected to teach in a two-teacher open classroom in a lower-socio-economic area of a large city. The plans to return to public school teaching had begun nearly one year prior. During this time, I had been fortunate to gain the cooperation of a highly competent teaching partner, who worked with me in planning the program we were to implement.

Since the two-teacher open classroom was a new addition to the school, the parents of the community were invited to a meeting in May at which my colleague and I outlined the program planned for the children. At the conclusion of the meeting parents who chose to do so enrolled their children in the program. In all, 65 children in grades four, five, and six, representing ten ethnic groups, were enrolled. About one-third of these were children for whom English was a second language. All 65 children arrived on September 1, and the program was under way.

One of the major aspects of the curriculum was an individualized

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reading program. Our earlier observations of individualized reading programs in numerous schools tended to confirm Hunter's assessment that "individualized instruction is one of the most popular and most misunderstood concepts in education," (Hunter, 1970). The reading programs observed lacked demonstrable evidence that the teachers were cognizant of the scope of skills involved in reading, were adequately trained to assess pupils' proficiency in various skills, or had selected the necessary materials to provide for the children's reading needs. Instructional components of the individualized programs lacked precision in providing tutelage according to pupil needs. Generally, in the programs observed, the children read books, with or without understanding, wrote book reports, and completed worksheets assigned without reference to their deficiencies in reading. In designing our program we planned to overcome the weaknesses observed, and to provide instruction in reading according to each child's needs so that he might progress as rapidly as his capabilities would allow.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Our first task in designing the reading program was to prepare a statement of instructional objectives. Since the multitude of skills that contribute to word recognition, comprehension and fluency constitute the specific objectives, we felt the need of a checklist of reading skills to ensure our own awareness of the scope, sequence, and interrelation of skills. Using a variety of sources (Barbe, 1961; Guzak, 1972; Otto, 1974) we developed a checklist of reading skills expected of children in elementary school to enable us to

determine pupil needs in reading and to give focus and direction to instruction.

ASSESSMENT OF PUPIL'S READING BEHAVIOR

Determination of a pupil's reading level and his ability in specific skills is essential in order to tailor instruction according to individual needs, as well as to provide a reference point for evaluating growth in reading. The results of the Gates Reading Survey administered at the end of the previous year, and results of the administration of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills in September gave us information on the level of reading achievement of each child. To obtain more precise data on pupil mastery of specific skills we administered the Prescriptive Reading Inventory. (PRI)

The PRI is a criterion-referenced test that assesses 90 different reading skills. The test is available in four levels:

Red Book: Reading levels 2.0 - 3.0

Green Book: Reading levels 2.5 - 3.5

Blue Book: Reading levels 3.0 - 4.5

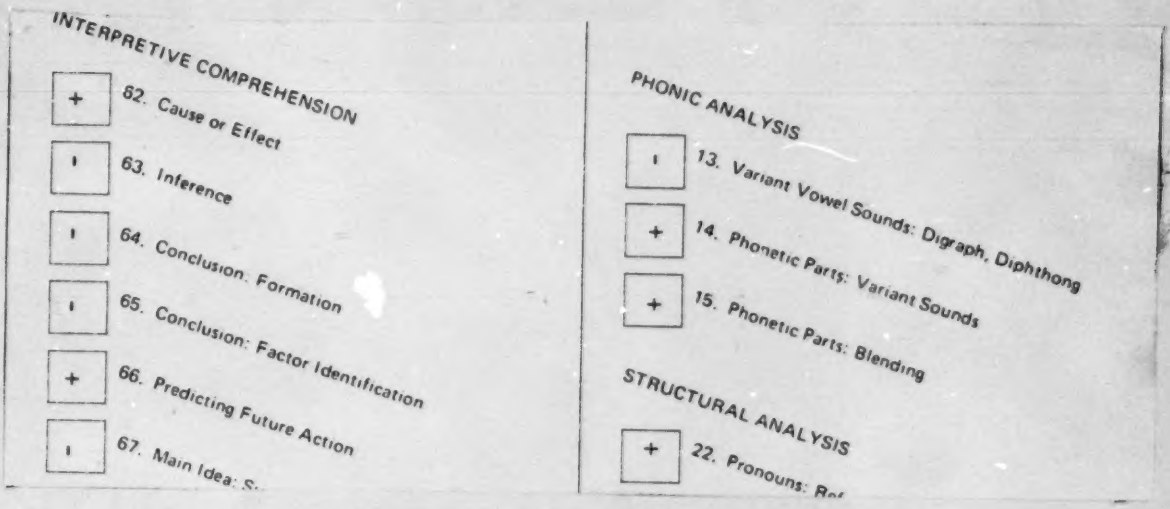
Orange Book: Reading levels 4.0 - 6.5

Each child was given the test appropriate for his reading level. The tests were computer scored and results were analyzed and returned in the following forms:

Individual Diagnostic Map (IDM)

The IDM reports the status of each pupil in relation to the objectives on which he was tested, and indicates those

objectives which he has mastered (+), those he has not mastered (-), and those for which he needs review (R) as in the following example:


INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION
+ 62. Cause or Effect
- 63. Inference
- 64. Conclusion: Formation
- 65. Conclusion: Factor Identification
+ 66. Predicting Future Action
- 67. Main Idea: S.
PHONIC ANALYSIS
- 13. Variant Vowel Sounds: Digraph, Diphthong
+ 14. Phonetic Parts: Variant Sounds
+ 15. Phonetic Parts: Blending
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS
+ 22. Pronouns: Re

Class Grouping Report

The Class Grouping Report lists the seven categories of PRI objectives, such as Phonic Analysis and Structural Analysis, and indicates by an asterisk each student who has failed to show mastery of 60 per cent or more of the objectives in each category, as in the following example:

BLUE BOOK (C)

NAMES	PHONIC ANALYSIS	STRUC ANALYSIS	TRANS-LATION	LITERAL COMP	INTERP COMP I	INTERP COMP II	CRITICAL COMP
BRISCOE,NANCY			*		*	*	*
BROWNE,FRANKLIN	*	*			*	*	*
CALABRESE,TONY	*	*		*			
DAVIDSON,MAL	*	*	*		*	*	*
DAVIS,ERNESTINE			*	*	*	*	*
ELDER,LYNN	*	*			*		
FELICIANO,MIGUEL	*		*	*	*	*	*
HARRIS,JEAN	*	*				*	*

The Individual Study Guide

The individual study guide directs the student or the teacher to pages in his reading material that provide instruction on those behaviors he has not mastered as in the following example:

TABLE 8 TEXTBOOK- GALAXIES HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. 6R 1971

OBJECTIVE	LEVEL A B C D	STUDENT EDITION REFERENCE	TEACHER EDITION REFERENCE	WORKBOOK REFERENCE
RECOGNITION OF SOUND AND SYMBOL	I I I I I		I	I
1 VOWEL SOUNDS-MATCHING LIKE OR VARIANT	IXIXI I I		I (410G,452W)	I (1)
2 CONSONANT SOUNDS-LETTERS	I IXI I I		I (409G)	I
PHONIC ANALYSIS	I I I I I		I	I
5 CONSONANT SUBSTITUTION-INIT. AND FINAL	IXIXI I I	(172)	I	I
13 VARIANT VOWEL SOUNDS-DIGRAPH,DIPHTHONG	I I IXIXI		I (415G)	I
14 PHONETIC PARTS-VARIANT SOUNDS	I IXIXIXI		I (415G)	I
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS	I I I I I		I	I
16 INFLECTED WORDS-SINGULAR/PLURAL	IXI I I I		I	I (38)
17 INFLECTED WORDS(ENDINGS)AND AFFIXES	IXIXI I I		I	I (65)
22 PRONOUNS-REFERENT	I I IXIXI		I (231G,443W,480W)	I (54)
24 COMPOUNDS-RECOGNITION	IXI I I I		I (49G)	I (3)
26 WORD STRUCTURE-ENDINGS,SPELLING CHANGE	I IXI I I		I (263G)	I
29 SENTENCE BUILDING-SUBJECT,PREDICATE	IXI I I I		I (129G,130G,131G)	I
30 SENTENCE BUILDING-PHRASE SELECTION	I I IXI I		I	I (30)
31 PHRASE INFORMATION	I I IXI I		I	I (82)
32 AFFIXES-IDENTIFYING PREFIXES,SUFFIXES	I I IXI I		I (175G,197G,200G),250G,	I (37,64)
	I I I I I		I 251G,262G,263G,498W	I
33 AFFIXES-BUILDING WORDS	I I IXIXI		I (472W),477W,(486W,487W)	I
34 DEFINING AFFIXED WORDS	I IXIXIXI		I (155G),175G,197G,200G,	I
	I I I I I		I (250W),262G,263G,(484W)	I
35 DEFINING AFFIXES	I I I IXI		I (175G),197G,(200G),	I
	I I I I I		I 250G,(262SI,263G	I
36 PUNCTUATION-COMMA	I I I IXI (54,55)		I (54G,55G,67G)	I

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

In planning the instruction in reading in the open classroom we had to consider the kinds of reading activities that would facilitate pupil learning, the organization and scheduling of these activities, and the support materials that would be appropriate for instruction and meeting the needs of the students.

Teacher-directed Group Reading Activities

To provide for the needs of the pupils in reading and to

ensure their continued development of basic reading skills, we decided to provide teacher-directed group reading activities. Most children of comparable reading competency need continued extension, review and practice of reading skills which develop over years in school. Grouping of children for reading instruction is "economical of teacher planning and teaching time, fosters an esprit or group spirit among pupils, enables the teacher to work effectively with part of the class, and thus, helps her meet pupils instructional needs" (Spache, 1973). In addition, "training in reading that embodies the dynamics of discovery and accuracy results in systematic examination of ideas. Such training is best accomplished in a group situation where discussion can do for thinking what testing on real objects does for seeing" (Stauffer, 1969).

The class was divided into seven reading groups. Each group met with a teacher at least twice a week for directed reading and skill development lessons. Reading groups of students in the lower achievement levels met with the teacher more frequently.

For instructional purposes each group was assigned a basal reader at the level appropriate to the group's reading achievement. In addition each pupil was issued the accompanying skills handbook. The materials included Ginn 360, Keys to Reading, Starting Points in Reading, SRA Individualized Reading, and Passport to Reading.

Independent group reading activities

To provide for independent learning each reading group was assigned an appropriate level of a commercially prepared audio

reading program which provided both a consolidation extension of basic reading skills at the level of reading achievement of each group. These audio programs also provided an alternate approach through which children could master basic reading skills.

The instructional materials for the independent learning included Audio-Reading (Economy 1973) and Clues to Reading (Economy, 1973)

Individually Prescribed Instruction and Practice

Each pupil was apprised of his areas of strengths and weaknesses in reading. After individual instruction to correct his deficiencies each child completed sufficient practice material at the appropriate level to ensure mastery of the skill. Sources of instructional and practice material included Specific Skills, Programmed Reading, appropriate tapes from Audio-Reading, and Clues to Reading, as well as a teacher prepared kit consisting of exercises selected from a vast array of reading workbooks. These exercises, filed according to skill and labelled according to grade level of difficulty, were assigned to pupils for additional practise, according to their identified needs.

Pupil Selected Reading Activities

We believed that children needed time to practise reading skills and to enjoy reading material of their own selection. Each day time was provided so that children could engage in recreational reading. Pupils recorded their independent reading, and their

reading was discussed periodically with a teacher. In addition most pupils elected to read when their assignments for the week were completed.

Books available in the classroom included Scholastic Individualized Reading and a collection of about one hundred copies of paper back and hard back fiction and non-fiction. In addition, pupils selected books from the school library and the public library.

Oral Reading

To supplement the oral reading conducted in group reading activities, groups of pupils practised oral reading in the presentation of plays chosen from Plays for Reading, Classroom Plays for Reading, and plays selected by the teachers for presentation to other classes.

These facets of the reading program provided systematic instruction of basic reading skills, specific instruction and practice according to individual pupil's needs, and opportunity to practise reading skills through dramatic readings and through enjoyment of individual pupil-selected recreational reading.

EVALUATION

Ideally, the evaluation of the reading program should have included not only techniques for formative and summative evaluation, but also a comparison with a comparable group of students receiving the standard classroom instruction in reading.

Unfortunately the reality of being classroom teachers responsible for planning and implementing a total program was extremely time-consuming. The time for preparing a research study is a luxury available to some ivory-tower expert; certainly it is rarely available to classroom teachers.

We had planned to use the Prescriptive Reading Interim Tests which assess pupil mastery of the earlier identified areas of weakness. These tests, ordered earlier in the year, arrived by mail on the last teaching day in June. However, through informal tests and observations, we felt that most pupils had made substantial gains in overcoming the weaknesses identified in the initial diagnosis.

The Canadian Test of Basic Skills, which had been administered in September was re-administered during the last week of May to determine individual pupil progress. In addition, results of the pre- and post-testing were analyzed to determine class progress in reading and are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Range and mean reading scores of pupils on pre-test and post-test of Canadian Test of Basic Skills

Group	N	Range		Mean		Average
		Pretest	Post-test	Pretest	Post-test	Gain
Grade 4	19	1.6-6.0	3.2-6.8	3.7	5.2	+1.5
5	21	1.5-7.8	4.0-8.2	5.2	6.1	+0.9
6	19	3.4-8.2	3.9-8.8	5.1	6.9	+1.8
Total Class	59	1.5-8.2	3.2-8.8	4.7	6.1	+1.4

The results in Table 1 indicate that in September the average reading score for 19 children in grade four was 3.7, ranging from 1.6 to 6.0. In June these children achieved an average reading score of 5.2, a growth of 1.5 years. Only two pupils, as opposed to 9 pupils in September, were now reading one or more grades

below grade level.

The 21 fifth grade students achieved an average reading score of 5.2 in September. The range of scores was from 1.5 to 7.8. Three pupils were reading one or more years below grade level. In June, this group achieved an average reading score of 6.1, which represented nine months' gain. Two pupils were still reading a year or more below grade level. The latter two children, although each achieved a year or more growth in reading, were handicapped by both emotional and social problems that inhibited school progress.

The 19 pupils in grade six in September achieved an average score of 5.1, the scores ranging from 3.4 to 8.2. In both September and June, three children were reading a grade or more below grade level. Of the three reading below grade level, two children made little progress. Again, these children were handicapped by emotional and social problems. The average gain for the 19 sixth grade pupils was 1.8 years.

For the class as a whole, the average gain in reading was 1.4 years. The majority of children made substantial progress in reading. On the basis of previous achievement in reading, the pupils in all three grades made gains as great or greater than what would have been expected.

While the pupil gains in reading achievement as measured by the standardized test were to us indications of a successful reading program, other pupil gains not measured by tests, were even more indicative of its value. Most of the pupils were at the end of the year able to discuss short stories at an interpretative and critical

level. These abilities, developed in the teacher directed reading-thinking activities, were exercised by the pupils in their independent reading as evidenced by their comments on the merits or deficiencies of their choice of recreational reading material.

The final proof of the success of a reading program is in the extent to which children read. The pupils in our class looked forward to and participated enthusiastically in their story discussions. They frequently requested additional time for independent reading, and consequently read more with greater interest and enthusiasm. The proof of the program was in the reading.

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